

DRAMATIC LYRICS

JOHN GURDON

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BY THE SAME AUTHOR

ERINNA, A TRAGEDY

THE SPECTATOR.

"This is an excellent piece of work, as full of promise as anything we have seen for some time; worthy to be ranked with Mr. Swinburne's 'Atalanta in Calydon'; to be put, that is if we may use an academical expression, in the same class, though not in the same division. . . . About the dramatic power of 'Erinna,' constructed as it is according to the strictest canon of the unities, there can be no question. The treatment, too, is austere in its abstinence from all modern, *i.e.*, non-classical treatment. . . . He shows powers which he may well use hereafter to compel the world to listen."

THE PILOT.

"We have already quoted enough to show that he is a poet of remarkable promise."

THE SCOTSMAN.

"The stately exaltation of the dramatic dialogue through which this fable is unfolded cannot be well exhibited in any brief citation, nor is the melodious richness of the lyrical passages any less remarkable; and the play, as a whole, is an example of cultured Hellenism in English which cannot but interest and impress every lover of refined poetry who considers it."

THE GLASGOW HERALD.

"Mr. Gurdon has written a fine play. It is full of beautiful passages, which go to prove that the purest spirit of poetry is still unquenched, and is moving among us."

DRAMATIC LYRICS

DRAMATIC LYRICS

BY

JOHN GURDON

LONDON

ELKIN MATHEWS, VIGO STREET

1906

TO MY WIFE

IN THANK-OFFERING FOR MY LIFE'S HAPPINESS

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK OF VERSE

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DRAMATIC LYRICS

LIFE'S ENIGMA

SPHINX.

Who art thou flying overhead ?

CHIMÆRA.

I am the dream of lives that die.

SPHINX.

Hast thou my riddle soothly read ?

CHIMÆRA.

I am the answer, even I.

SPHINX.

Come down to earth. Art thou not mine ?

CHIMÆRA.

My wings are hope, which cannot rest.

SPHINX.

Hope fails, and fail those wings of thine.

CHIMÆRA.

Not till the East shall touch the West.

SPHINX.

I hold the secret of the Earth.

CHIMÆRA.

And I, the word which is the key.

SPHINX.

I know the bounds of death and birth.

CHIMÆRA.

And I, the soul's immensity.

SPHINX.

I am necessity and fate.

CHIMÆRA.

But I, the spirit more than these.

SPHINX.

Do homage: I alone am great.

CHIMÆRA.

My law is not necessity's.

SPHINX.

I have power upon thee at the last.

CHIMÆRA.

Thou canst not overtake me soon.

SPHINX.

Somewhere my clutch shall hold thee fast.

CHIMÆRA.

East of the sun, West of the moon.

SPHINX.

O futile dream, there shall of thee
Nothing be found when time is done.

CHIMÆRA.

I shall endure, when thou wilt be
Cold dust beneath an ashen sun.
And the new covenant begun.

AN EVOCATION

SHINE again, O thou portent of splendour,
 Diadumene, star of the morning.
 Be the fillet thy temples adorning
 Bound anew for one victory the more.
 Take thy triumph, for, fain to surrender,
 Our hearts be. Ah, rise to relieve us
 From the worship of idols more grievous
 Than Moloch of yore.

Of all dreams that inspired us and guided,
 The dull demon of gain has bereft us;
 Not the throb of a passion is left us,
 Not a pulse, not an impulse to stir.
 The fine gold of the soul is divided
 Between Mammon and God, for we palter
 With both, laying doles on each altar
 Of incense and myrrh.

Ah, would we might waken from slumber,
 From the dream that we stifle and bleed in,
 And, as Eve in the Garden of Eden,
 Behold thee take shape with the dawn.
 From cares and conventions that cumber
 Broken loose, and the prison enchanted
 Of sin, live serene and undaunted,
 Of freedom re-born !

From the labour that mars and debases
 The body and soul of the toiler,
 Subduing all Nature to soil her,
 All flesh but to slay or enslave ;
 From the greed that begrimes and disgraces
 The green earth to a noisome Gehenna
 Fire-defaced as the meadows of Enna,
 Oh, heal us and save !

What name for thy sake shall be spoken
 With praise between nation and nation ?
 What blood shall be spilt for libation ?
 What cities spent glorious in fire ?
 By what shock shall our bondage be broken ?
 Will an earthquake's upheaval from under
 Bare in ruin to daylight, I wonder,
 Our epoch of mire ?

None replies. When thy planet ascendant
 Rides over the mists of the morning,
 Who shall say what the day that is dawning
 May date till all ages be dead ?
 Only this : that once more a resplendent
 Renown will bejewel the tissue
 Brocaded of purples that issue
 From hearts that have bled.

For behind and before thee, gigantic,
 Stalk ever the Scourgers of mortals,

Grim Furies who garnish the portals
 Of death with the trophies of crime.
 As a star of the seething Atlantic
 Soars away from the welter of waters,
 Thy fame from oppressions and slaughters
 Emerges sublime.

On that darkness more cheerless and colder
 Than midnight, the nadir of ages,
 When the prophets are dumb and the sages
 Are blind, and man's spirit astray
 Cowers down by the watch-fires that smoulder
 On battle-fields fought and forsaken,
 Thou, dawn-bearer, risest to waken
 Glad strife with the day.

O Miriam, thy pitiless pæan
 Rises yet o'er thine enemies sunken
 As lead in the waters ; though drunken
 With vengeance, implacable still.
 Like a sphinx, in the desert Chaldæan
 Gazing out in the silence for ever,
 Semiramis sits by the river
 She warped to her will.

Fair daughter of Leda, what charm is
 In beauty so potent, that stronger
 Than passion pulsating no longer,
 It vanquished the hate of the old ?

In her cause would the people in armies
Assemble, or cities be taken ?
By what wrong their allegiance be shaken
To traffic and gold ?

Livid masks of cadaverous pallor,
Without love, without hope, or believing,
Too crass for rejoicing or grieving,
More callous than granite of flags,
Souls dead in corruption and squalor,
What fiend would accept you in payment
For the garbage ye feed on, your raiment
Of pestilent rags ?

Around us, a river polluted,
Air tainted, the vault of a cavern !
What wonder, from tavern to tavern
Men reel on their path to the grave,
Drink-sodden, diseased, and embruted ?
Ah, Crowned One, be strong to deliver,
Though blood must be spilt as a river
To cleanse us and save.

LES ILLUSIONS PERDUES

(From a Picture.)

I.

WHY dost thou sit alone,
 Poet, with laurelled head
 Bowed, and thy listless hand
 Loosing the lyre ?
 " I have plucked the mystic cone
 From Comus' wand," he said,
 " And from his falling brand
 Stamped out the fire."

Who are these glorious
 That throng yon gilded bark
 With flags that flaunt and blow,
 Streaming to sea ?
 Joy shines upon their brows.
 He answered, " Mine are dark,
 For these are dreams that go,
 Forsaking me."

One stands upon the stem,
 His face is like a flame,
 The light of the setting sun
 Flames in his hair.

“ Ah, tardy diadem !
Behold ambition’s aim,
An hour-brief chaplet spun
Of fire and air.”

Who like a nesting dove
Snowy and soft reclines
Cradled in Youth’s embrace,
Radiant with bliss ?
“ My heart’s warm dream of love.
It is my soul that shines
Out of her eyes and face
Now turned to his.”

And one by one with cold
Calm voice their names he told,
Friendship and Faith,
Pleasure, Desire, and Pride :
When sudden by his side
I saw one stand, and cried :—
“ Thy name ? ” My name is Death.

II.

Look up, I cried, look up ;
The ocean, like a cup
Of sparkling wine,
Froths o’er his golden rim.
“ I see gray waters dim,
And scurf of brine.”

Nay, but look forth ; behold
The intolerable gold
Blaze of the setting sun.
In ruby and chrysoprase,
Like one great opal blaze
The clouds. "Nor sun nor cloud
I see, but night begun
To weave my shroud."

He ceased. The twain were gone,
And gone the magic bark ;
It vanished like a spark.
The wind blew cold ;
Pale grew the sea and sky :
I waited silently
There in the dusk alone.
I too was old.

A BAHAMIAN NIGHT

SAY why in the moonshine shows your face so pale,
 O my love, my love ?

It is white as the perfumed stars of the jasmin trail
 Swaying above,

Or out in the Narrows those petals of pearly sail.

“ It is pale with passion and wan with love’s delight
 And love’s unrest.

Ah, what shall I do with my life when your love takes
 flight

For a balmier breast,
 For a rosier cheek than the cheek you find so white ? ”

Listen, sweet, to the whispering sigh of the cool sea
 breeze

That goes sifting through
 The winnowing slats aslant of the jalousies :—
 “ I have flown to you,

And I die as I kiss your bosom and clasp your knees.”

Will the wind go wooing another ? His flight is
 flown,

His wings are furled.

And Love flies free as the wind to one heart alone
 In all the world,

And then—he must tarry for ever, dear heart, my
 own.

" Is yon still river of milky light a dream
 Or a road by day?
 White ruffle the palms and vanish like puffs of steam.
 In silvery gray
 The shingled roofs of the shadowy houses gleam.

" White flashes the diamond spray over Silver Cay
 Like a storm of stars,
 And white the tide sets sobbing away to sea
 On the coral bars,
 And white clouds climb to the zenith and sink to lee.

" In the spell-wind blowing across the world to-night
 The world's desire
 As an ambient aura quickens, a lambent light
 Of argent fire.
 And I—do you wonder, love, that my cheeks are
 white? "

ANTIGONE

PERCHANCE her faith seems strange, which could rely
On spilt libation and on sprinkled dust,
Which in such forms had so supreme a trust
That for their meet observance she could die,
Leaving her lover and the sunlit sky
And the old sweet life, her birthright, for a crust
Of cheerless duty sold, a sop to thrust
Between the jaws of blind brute destiny.

Ah then, dear love, should not our love be true ?
She died to sprinkle on her brother dead
Those costly grains of unavailing sand :
The sands of all my days to come, if few
Or many, as the gods may will, are shed
And heaped within the hollow of your hand.

PENUMBRA

ONCE more the gray-eyed goddess of the dawn
Dethrones the night,
Whom fleeting stars abandon, far withdrawn
To left and right
Before the fiery onset of the morn.

Till the dawn break and shadows flee away,
How long, how long !
Yet, goddess of the tender eyes and gray,
Like flesh from thong
I flinch before the clarities of day.

Ah, linger, dearest ; let thy cloudy hair
Shadow my face.
Light as a moth wing lay thy cool lips where
Their dews erase
The last script on the palimpsest of care.

THE NAIAD

FAR off, she hears a roar
Of rollers on the shore,
Then turns to watch once more
 The sallows quiver,
As the warm wind at ease
Saunters among the trees,
Drops, and her face she sees
 In the smooth river.

Pliant and placid all,
With swaying rise and fall
Along the lapping wall
 The water wanders :
Sweeping with even pace
Through the frail lines that trace
The semblance of her face
 As there she ponders.

What are her thoughts ? Who knows
The reverie of the rose ?
The long sweet swooning doze
 Of fruited summer ?

As the blue river haze
Drifts down the water ways,
Dreams she of winter days
And mists to numb her ?

Daughter of Joy, for thee
Winter shall never be ;
Frost shall not strip the tree
Nor bind the river.
While the years come and go,
Still shall thy fountain flow
And the warm zephyr blow,
The sallows shiver.

IN PROFUNDIS

IRON-STRUNG should the harp be to sing to thee ;
 Iron-woven the chaplet should be.
 Thou who scornest all gifts that men bring to thee
 Wilt accept no peace-offering from me.
 This is none, but a psalm of thanksgiving
 That sweeter than life to the living
 Is death to thy dead, to thy chosen, who rest from
 their labours, O Sea.

In thy blue gulfs and the shallower
 Wastes where the waters are green,
 Thou art the grave and the hallower,
 Thou, of their burial unseen.
 Thy winds are their mourners ; their dirges
 Evermore in thy thundering surges
 Resound ; they are robed in thy splendour and palled
 in thy purple, O Queen.

Over them sleeping and under them,
 Blackness of darkness is shed.
 No storm from their haven can sunder them.
 As over iron the red

Rust spreads slow, and devours
 Its shape, the invisible showers
 Of sand shaken down from the feet of the waves cover
 body and head.

Up in the sunlight, thy surfaces
 Darken and lighten and gleam,
 Fitful and brief as the purposes
 Saved from the wrecks of a dream.
 But thy depths know not morn nor the even,
 Nor azure, nor cloudier heaven ;
 And flowerless and fadeless dim waver thy gardens in
 tideway and stream.

Far out where the ocean lies hollower,
 Far under the fathomless brine,
 Let me hide from the Furies that follow her
 My soul in recesses of thine.
 Where the daylight is driven asunder,
 Broken up by the darkness from under,
 The wine of their wrath slowly fades through the
 water like crimson of wine.

Subject or slave is there none to them
 There, nor dominion to stand.
 Evil and just are as one to them,
 Passed from the reach of their hand.
 Deep calleth to deep in their falling
 Down lightless abysses appalling :
 " See thou yield not our suppliants for prey to the gods
 of their terror on land ! "

Open thy chasms, and swallow them
Into the mazes of night,
Whither their works shall not follow them,
Anguish nor glory requite.
As a froth flake that flutters and hisses,
Flying loose o'er unsounded abysses,
So passes man's life and so perish the labours he
wrought in the light.

IMMORTAL SPRING

WORDS of welcome more blithely spoken
 Greet you, perchance, on this Easter morn.
 These are but halting, a wistful token
 Of wishes your heart is too kind to scorn.
 For if the sound of them jar and jangle
 Harsh, unmusical, cracked in chime,
 The thought runs true through the rough-spun tangle
 Of heedless rhyme.

Almost April is past and over,
 Primrose month of the rainbow showers.
 In northern nooks of the wild-wood cover
 Late Lent-lilies yield up their flowers.
 The sun and the swallow have come together ;
 The north wind hushes and hastes away ;
 And lolls in the lap of the silky weather,
 The lengthening day.

Ah that the spring may have no abiding !
 Ah that the summer must fade and fall !
 Ah that so few are the days dividing
 The weeks from winter, the end from all !

Alas for the sun and the wheeling swallow,
The love that shone, and the thought that flew
Like a sylph of the morn through the sunlit hollow
Of silvery blue !

Yet in your bosom the spring will linger ;
Still in your heart will the sun survive.
And as to the touch of your elfin finger
The spirit of music awakes alive,
My cold heart warms with the old romances,
And my blood leaps up and my thoughts take wing
At the smile from your lips to your eyes that dances,
Immortal Spring.

PHYLLIS AND DEMOPHOÖN

O PHYLLIS, dryad of the almond tree
 Whose latticed branches spread and intertwine
 Their rosy mesh in the blue hyaline,
 Caging the light-winged zephyrs wild and free,
 Dost those remember thee
 Of the old time fled and the lone winter days,
 When the bleak headland and the weedy ways
 Beheld thy weary vigil while the wind
 Mingled his wail with the sea-birds' clamouring?
 O glowing jewel between the eyes of Spring,
 How shouldst thou call to mind
 The melancholy coast, the waves that roar,
 Dark as cleft flint, along the Thracian shore?

Through white sea mist the sun rose up like blood,
 And like a formless floating sun she shone,
 The red-prowed warship of Demophoön,
 Oaring her way over the oily flood.
 High on the poop he stood,
 Steering through breaches in the crumbling wall
 Of rollers overarching to their fall
 Where the bar boomed across the estuary.
 The yellow waters and the sedgy bank
 Rocked to the wash of the long oars in rank,

With easier dip that ply,
 As the tired rowers on the long thwarts wave-wet
 Dashed from their peering eyes the blinding sweat.

The peaks of Rhodope were white with snow,
 But whiter shone her bosom where she stood,
 Phyllis the queen, in that sad autumn wood
 With him she loved, who came and now must go.
 Ah, well the grief I know !
 Like flakes of beaten copper the leaves fell ;
 The wizened bracken in moist glade and dell
 Burned with dull fire ; the drizzle of the dew
 Dripped from black boughs upon her upturned face
 Pale as a wind-flower in that sad place ;
 And then her tears anew
 Wetted her cheek : she shivered in the chill,
 Standing beside him on the rain-soaked hill.

Was there no chief with panoply of gold
 In Thrace, O queen, goodlier to gaze upon
 Than this swart stranger, this Demophoön,
 Whose hair was streaked with grey, and face grown
 old

In leaguer of the hold,
 God-built and god-defended, of Troy town ?
 His helmet, dinted thin and tarnished brown,
 Showed worn and fragile as a withered leaf.
 The chasing on sword scabbard and sword hilt
 Effaced, and dulled the crests of horsehair gilt.

Was there no lordlier chief ?
 What if there were ; he was thy chosen one,
 And who could stand beside him 'neath the sun ?

Ah, sweet is love ; but bitter is the pain
 He leaves behind as for remembrance sake :
 And as with fire of frost, her heart did ache
 When her sad eyes, bedimmed with tears and rain,
 Oft watched the hurricane
 Drive rain and spray, in blind confusion blent
 With tattered cloud, across the firmament.
 Or when the winds were frozen into calm
 Like ice-bound rivers silent and congealed
 Which cease the music of their murmurous psalm
 'Twixt snowy field and field,
 She saw the shape of sorrow unto death
 Pass phantomwise upon her vaporous breath.

A waft of death against thee sent, O queen,
 Whose love, not life, outwore the winter's reign,
 For never in sweet familiar wise again
 Should the new time be as the old time had been.
 Before the woods were green,
 Across an almond bough her wild hands drew
 Her linen girdle fast, and desperate threw
 The woven noose over her shapely head ;
 While swift the pine-wrought well-oared warship
 came,
 Red and refulgent as a wrathful flame.

Swift! But more swiftly sped
 The indignant shade before the blast that drives
 The dizzy flocks of disembodied lives.

He saw her hair blown loose upon the wind,
 And the tense ivory of her bloodless feet.
 Though various Iris were the paraclete,
 'Twere all too late to aid her, or re-bind
 The threads untwined
 From the rent woof of life's unravelled edge.
 As well restrain Chimæra with a hedge
 Of osier withes as seek to fence off death :
 Much less, then, shall one wrest his prey from him,
 Which like a lion crouched limb on limb,
 Holding, he sundereth
 From the affrighted herd afar that run
 With antlers pressed against their shoulders dun.

The russet trunk in grief's abandonment
 He clasped with vain embraces ; the rough bark
 Dented and chafed his chin with crimson mark
 Like some god-printed sign of punishment.
 And still his eyes were bent
 On that dead form which, even as he gazed,
 Seemed to withdraw before his vision dazed.
 Then as the lamps of the Eleusinian shrine
 Put forth their fire buds when the hierophant
 Touches the wicks while swells the sacred chaunt,

So rosy blossoms shine
Starlike along the boughs' bare tracery
Black-fretted on the chill pale turquoise sky.

Until within his circling arms compressed
He felt the rigid wood grow soft and warm ;
And, gliding through the cloven bark, her form
Slipped, and he found her folded to his breast,
His Phyllis manifest,—
A woman still. Yet that had touched the clay
Which thrilled the veins of sweet Ambrosia
With the strong ichor of divinity.
And still with spring returning she returns,
And still her answering passion breathes and burns ;
Her glorious canopy
Drapes with new splendour all her boughs above,
Fit tent for ageless youth and everlasting love.

ERYTHEIA

IN the days of long ago,
 Ere the walls of Sybaris
 Gleamed in marble white as snow
 Through the rose-trails' crimson glow,
 Italy was not; for this
 Called they Erytheia then,
 Sunset's dim dominion fair,
 Land of gods and godlike men,
 Land of hushed and purple air.
 Here the mighty shades reclined
 In lush meadows where the Hours
 Mothlike flit, nor rain nor wind
 Wakes the drowsy flowers.

Till the Arcadian sea-lost band
 Crossed the unsailed Ionian sea;
 Landed on the lovely strand,
 But they found no sunset land,
 No happy golden Arcady.
 Ghost or god was none to greet;
 Amaranth nor asphodel
 Flecked the sward beneath their feet,
 Nor in calm unchangeable

Brooded all the winds alway
Under skies of reddening gold :
Shower with shine, and night with day
Changed, and heat with cold.

So, the Islands of the Blest
Lie, they said, beyond the seas
Of the illimitable West
Where the swirling tides are pressed
Through the Gates of Heracles.
Utmost Gades, where the stream
Sweeps away to gulfs that yawn
Down the shapeless realms of dream
'Twixt the sunset and the dawn,
Almost holds the peaks in sight—
Seen against the setting sun
Through the falling veils of night
Fading, dulled and dun.

Then the Northman and the Dane,
Driven before the tempest's blast,
Swept through spray and splintering rain
O'er the chill, grey, western main,
Till their eyes beheld at last
When the gale was spent, and all
Fringed with fire the rollers sped
Westward through the evenfall,
Faery cliffs of dusky red

Glow like embers, till the wrack,
Rolling, dimmed the enchanted shine,
And the dawn showed blank and black
All the far sea line.

Beckoning dreams, ye still beguile
Hearts as fain as those of old.
Looms St. Brandan's faery isle,
And Hesperia's gardens smile
With their wealth of guarded gold.
Who can say we seek no more
Than the daylight things that are ?
Who but hopes a happier shore
Underneath the evening star ?
One by one, or soon or late,
We shall find the lonely way
To the Islands Fortunate
At the close of day.

NIRVANA

I saw a Naiad sleeping,
 Couched in her lucid river ;
 O'er breast and flank, as o'er a bank
 The aspen shadows quiver,
 The restless ripples shining
 Went wavering to and fro ;
 And rustling sedge was sweeping
 Over her limbs reclining
 Along the current's flow
 That clasped her as she sank.

So might I rest for ever
 With music flowing o'er me
 In liquid streams, and rainbow gleams
 Of beauty float before me.
 In veil of silvery showers
 The old tears should pearly shine,
 And life's fordone endeavour
 Be one deep anodyne
 To lull the languid hours,
 To drown my soul in dreams.

Ah me, to close in slumber
 The weary lids and aching !

To weave a veil of darkness pale
 Between the morning breaking
 And eyes that rest from roving ;
 Such veil of dimmest dawn
 Night, suppliant, draws to cumber
 The rising of the morn
 With lingering hands and loving
 That slowly droop and fail.

For all things fade and, fading,
 Bereave the soul of gladness.
 So soon, so soon life's mellow noon
 Declines to vesper sadness.
 Through autumn years we follow
 Desire with shuffling feet ;
 In woe's black waters wading
 'Neath age's mortal sleet,
 Slow-falling down the hollow
 By that chill torrent hewn.

But yet—ah, love, to leave you
 Were bitterer than searing
 With red-hot steel the eyes that feel
 The torment slowly nearing
 Till sight in pain is darkened.
 Yet, bitterer still, it were
 To watch the years bereave you
 Of soul and body fair,
 And break the song we hearkened,
 And hush the heart's appeal.

I crave no crown of glory,
Who seek but cease from craving.
Is one thing worth, on all the earth,
The losing or the saving?
We are born, we die, and after
Oblivion scattereth
Her poppy o'er the story
Of birth and love and death,
The life that is but laughter
Of some encyclic mirth.

THE MOON-SPELL

THE MOON.

WHY follow ye after my gliding car,
Spirits of heaven who, star by star,
Like sparks rise out of the ocean stream ?

THE STARS.

As air bells, clinging to weeds asway,
Float up to be kissed by the wind away,
So we, to be lost in thy wavering dream.

THE MOON.

Far under me running, the rumour goes
Of a tide that steadily swells and flows
To the surge and the heave of a labouring sea.

THE SEA.

The sunken sills of my sea-gates know
The way that the wheels of thy white car go
By the throng of the waters that seek to thee.

THE MOON.

Art thou weary of flying from dome to dome
Of cloudscape summits more white than foam
Through violet deeps of the night, O wind ?

THE WIND.

The flames burn dim in the spheral shells,
And the floods sink down in the ocean wells,
And my wings fail me and fall behind.

THE STARS.

Had we but the wind's wings, fleet and free!—

THE WIND.

Were I clothed with the strength of the thundering
sea!—

THE SEA.

Could I soar like a bubble of silver fire!—

STARS, WIND, AND SEA.

Ah, then we would find thee and find sweet rest,
And, frozen to sleep on thy swan-white breast,
The long love perish, the pain expire.

DANSE MACABRE

PLAY, recorders, play till all
 Man's unseemly masque be done.
 Till through heaven the moon and sun
 Are following earth's funeral,
 Let your tune
 Wail and warble, pine and croon.

Let the clacking castanet
 Chatter in its bony glee.
 On the marge of memory
 Love will set, and love's regret
 Late or soon
 Dwindle as the waning moon.

Say, thou futile fragile urn :
 In what underworld obscure
 Doth thy graven grief endure,
 Doth thy carven flambeau burn ?
 Grim buffoon,
 Grinning 'mong the skulls at noon,

Void of reverence, void of ruth
 Gibbeting in face of day
 Piteous horrors of decay,
 Thou art gibbering the truth
 Fools impugn
 In lettered brass and marble hewn.

Verily, the like event
Happeneth to all : we pass
From flesh to dust, from dust to grass,
From grass to flesh, their nourishment
Who'll wear our shoon
And dance the self-same rigadoon.

PARTHENOPE

ON the flowing river of flower-sweet wind
Dreamily pillowed I float, and sing
A murmurous song like the tide in spring
When the farthest ripple expires in foam
By the last white shell on the bleaching sand,
The tune none ever shall understand
Till the ocean rest and the wind blow home,
And youth grow cold and the sun grow blind.

Follow me, follow me over the sea
From the weary toil of the sail and oar
To the land of promise, yon shimmering shore.
She is there, thy vision unveiled in swoon
By the foam-born goddess, who paused to press
With palm more soft than my song's caress
Thine eyelids heavy with sleep one noon.
For joy dwells whither the shy dreams flee.

One swift plunge in the dimpling blue,
Then away on the croup of the galloping surge!
Away to and up to and over the verge
Of the reef that roars in a whirl of white,
As the rollers hurtle and rear and fall
In mist and glitter across her wall.
Thou shalt win to the haven of Heart's Delight,
The Isle of Passion where love comes true.

Where the waves die out in a seething sheet
 That rocks to the sway of the under-swell,
 An eddy as smooth as the lip of a shell
 Will carry thee shoreward and lay thee down
 On the bents at the feet of her standing there,
 The fires of the West in her tawny hair.
 Like a storm-plucked tassel of seaweed brown
 Cast by the wash of the wave at her feet.

Then she will kiss thee, bending over thee,
 Cheeks aflush, and her eyes aflame ;
 And chiding a little with gentle blame,
 Thy head she will pillow 'tween arm and side,
 Saying : " Why hast thou waited so long, so long,
 To follow the lilt of the Siren song
 And come to me ? " So will she softly chide,
 While her sighs surround and her tresses cover thee.

Till thy cold veins quicken with green sea-fire,
 And under thee meeting her white arms twine,
 And thou shalt be hers and her charms be thine.
 Till thy pulses dwindle as darkness grows,
 And closelier ever her scarlet lips
 Fasten, and slowly her hot breath strips,
 Petal by petal, life's rifled rose,
 And thou die on the heart of thy heart's desire.

MAD ALOÿS

FAIR is thy face to see,
 Mother, my Normandy,
 Since his sad eyes on me
 Gaze out from thine.
 Thy winds blow, and he speaks,
 His breath against my cheeks.
 I hear him now ! He seeks
 To give the sign !

Through that gray dawn in spring
 I heard the throstle sing ;
 Then one long quivering
 Clear note I heard.
 Out of the dusk and dew
 It rose, the call I knew,
 More piercing sweet, more true
 Than any bird.

Swift from my couch I rose—
 How his breath comes and goes !—
 And through the orchard close
 Stole to the tryst.
 Fleet though I sped, more fleet
 Death strode before my feet.
 Death stole away my sweet
 Ere we had kissed.

For as my face to his
 Drew slowly, even, I wis,
 As when the wine-cup is
 Filled to the brim,
 One lifts it slow to sip
 Once with unhasty lip
 Lest the least drop should slip
 Over the rim,

Sudden a sword-flash played
 Before mine eyes, the blade,
 Down driven, slashed and frayed
 My girdle band.
 Thrust through his heart, it came.
 Father of woe and shame,
 Salt in thy sevenfold flame
 The accurséd hand !

"Love," moaned he, "I am slain."
 Then silence: and again
 I heard the throstle's strain
 Shrill overhead.
 Then they, my brethren, they
 Spurning him where he lay,
 Stood up and praised the day
 That he was dead.

"Get hence! Go leave," I cried,
 "The bridegroom with the bride.
 Though it be morningtide,
 Why should we rise?"

Shall we not take our fill
Of love? " Ah, wind of ill,
That on my brow breath'st chill
His dying sighs!

Our marriage bed was set—
Wind-flowers, the coverlet—
'Neath apple boughs that met
Encanopied.
Soft as a silent rain,
Their blossom showered amain,
White with a rosy stain
On either side.

Slumbering the live-long day,
Within my arms he lay.
I had no heart, I say,
To bid him wake.
I had no care to move
That I might rouse my love,
Lest the dear heart they clove,
Beating, should break.

I know not if I slept,
But o'er me darkness crept,
And in the dark I wept
Until the light.
On cold frost-hardened ground
No couch of love I found,
Only a narrow mound
With rime bedight.

What were the words they said ?
 They beat within my head—
 “Long dead, long dead, long dead
 And buried deep !”
 Dead ? 'Tis not he, but I ;
 For, look, mine eyes are dry,
 Because the dead may sigh,
 But cannot weep.

Fools, though ye laid him there,
 My love is everywhere ;
 Out of the earth and air
 He calls to me.
 Fools, did ye think to bind
 Love ? Can ye net the wind,
 Or hath your hand confined
 The unsounded sea ?

He fills the summer's dream ;
 His are the locks that seem
 The charlock's yellow gleam
 Across the meads.
 His eyes are cornflowers blue,
 The poppies' sanguine hue
 Shows the wound soaked through
 That bleeds and bleeds.

I to the North and South
 Lift up my kissing mouth ;
 Closer than dearth to drouth,
 I cleave to him.

Unto the East and West
 I bare my burning breast,
 Till Time lie down to rest,
 The sun grow dim.

Till pole on flaming pole,
 As in red fire a scroll
 Curls, the wide heavens roll ;
 Till the great seas,
 God's wrath, enkindled, sup ;
 Made empty as a cup
 Whereout is drunken up
 Wine to the lees.

Then while Creation groans
 Death stricken, and the stones
 Cry out, and dead men's bones—
 Last harvest grim—
 Like leprosy o'erspread
 Blanched land, blear ocean bed,
 Who judgeth quick and dead,
 I'll say to Him :

“ Lord, at Thy clarion blown
 I come to claim my own.”
 Then shall this word be shown :
 “ O Aloÿs,
 Can ye find faster bands ?
 For, lo, thy lover stands,
 Thy face within his hands,
 To take thy kiss.”

NOCTURNE

HE.

THE heart of summer sighing
 Throbs in my cithern string,
 For the rose of June is dying,
 July is whispering,
 "My puissant reign is done."
 And August murmurs, lying
 Under a wearier sun,
 "Ah, May, call back the summer."

SHE.

Make music to September,
 But not to silvery May.
 Not hers to blow the ember
 Of fires that fade away :
 She is youth ! she is youth's delight.
 Shall the choral months dismember
 Their dance to stay the flight
 Of the careless spendthrift, summer ?

HE.

O lady of love, take pity.

SHE.

I pity, but thou must pine.

HE.

I weave my wayward ditty
Of ivy and eglantine.

SHE.

It is fading, fading, fading.

HE.

Sweet, do not laugh to scorn
Green grief of my autumn's braiding,
Gold honey-love in the horn
May set to the lips of summer.

VENUS URANIA

PASSION dies, but Love immortal
 Scatheless enters in, you said,
 By the anguish-haunted portal
 Of the country of the dead.
 There her realm is; there are mended
 All flawed hearts, their aching ended
 With desire that fled.

Who shall answer? All the fancies
 Man's sick heart could e'er devise,
 Poems, visions, dreams, romances,
 Faiths, and hopes and charities,
 Every thought-begotten creature
 There may gather form and feature
 Out beyond the skies.

So this dream you dream of even
 May find place among them all
 In the windless fields of heaven
 'Mid faint flowers funereal.
 Pulseless love—and shine nor shadow,
 Dark nor daylight finds the meadow
 Where no blossoms fall.

When our tears are dried, and laughter
 Silenced, and the heart's wild will
 Broken, and for all hereafter
 Change and chance are stricken still,
 When despair is whole, or bliss is
 Perfect, will discarnate kisses
 Wake the olden thrill ?

Day by day is birth beholden
 Unto death, and love to strife :
 Closed or ope, no gateway golden
 Breaks the boundary walls of life.
 Take this thought to heart and ponder—
 Why should disillusion yonder
 With this lure be rife ?

Ending ere the night be ended,
 Broken with the break of morn,
 All their gauzy robes and splendid
 Rainbow pinions frayed and torn,
 Flee our dreams, alas, and straightway,
 Vanish through the ivory gateway,
 Not the gates of horn.

From her beacon-tower a single
 Cresset Venus lights on high,
 Softly sky and ocean mingle
 Into sunset's harmony.
 How the awning-lanterns glisten
 Dully gold, and, dearest, listen
 How that melody

Fount-like soars, and sinks to vanish

In the heart like summer rain !

Yet, in vain I seek to banish

From mine ears the stern refrain,

The interminable thunder

Of the great fans grinding under

Through the seething main.

Here the hushed air, suave and gracious,

Seems to fondle stars and sea.

Thought grows musical and spacious,

Merged in vagrant reverie.

Like to gods, we watch at leisure

Birth and death and grief and pleasure

Shape life's mystery.

But below, 'mid brass and iron,

Flame, and steam, and grime, and oil,

Souls whom flesh and blood environ

Perish in relentless toil.

As with blood, the fierce fires redden ;

Like the gasps of lips that leaden

Hiss the pipes that coil.

Man may love, but man must labour ;

Man may dream, he must have bread.

By the sound of pipe or tabor

Shall this flesh be clothed and fed?

Toil we must though life be waning ;

Only death can ease the straining

Heart and 'wilderer head.

Search the world's unwritten story—
 History does but chronicle
 War and worship, shame and glory,
 But the legend who shall tell
 Of the labour through the ages
 Unrequited—all its wages
 Life's bare husk and shell ?

Years pass by, and still we fare on.
 Trust decays ; affection veers.
 Love's rose blooms, a rose of Sharon,
 On the Jordan of men's tears.
 At foiled hope, faith unrequited,
 Fate laughs loud, and, well delighted,
 Laugh the unconquered years.

Long ago to wiser nations
 This last word their sages spake :
 " Be your souls possessed in patience ;
 Eat your fill and drink, nor take
 Heed of Acheron, while roses
 Blossom, pluck till summer closes
 In Love's myrtle brake."

WINTER'S DAUGHTER

GOLD and clear azure overhead !
The sun's wheel rolls victoriously
Through rallying clouds and clouds that fly.
The daffodils are fleeced with snow ;
The snow's fair coverlet is spread
Lightly on lawn and garden bed
Where the white-wimpled snowdrops blow.

With cups of saffron'd hippocras
The crocus studs the silvery grass :
'Tis Winter's farewell feast to Spring.
Virgin, she leaves his house to find
Her lord the Summer. Down the wind
Dart flickering threads and shreds of song
The birds try over all day long,
And prelude notes of thanksgiving.

LIFE'S TOURNAMENT

EVERYTHING comes to an end at the last,
The rout and the rally alike overpast,
Grief ripens to sorrow and fades to regret ;
And where is the pleasure that stayed with us yet ?

Youth's disillusion, maturity's care,
Strip the lists of the banners that fluttered so fair ;
And the trumpets which rang to our triumph or fall
Hang dusty and dumb in Death's mouldering hall.

DEMETER OF CNIDOS

ARISE, come forth Demeter,
 O mother dear !
 Sweet grow the days and sweeter
 Upon the year.
 The wet west wind is streaming
 Through rainbow arches gleaming,
 Across the furrows teeming,
 For flowerful spring is here.

" Year after year, forsaken,
 I sit alone.
 Spring cannot warm or waken
 My heart of stone :
 And summer's graver glory,
 Sad autumn, winter hoary,
 Tell o'er a faded story
 Of joys long overblown."

Hark to the wild birds calling,
 Mate unto mate !
 The chestnut fans are falling ;
 The pomegranate
 In crimson flame of flowers
 Breaks, and the almond showers ;
 The poplar tints her towers
 With amber delicate.

"The old world, so blithe, is ended,
 Like harvest done ;
 Dead, as the seasons splendid
 Died one by one.
 All tires ; all breaks ; all passes
 As cloud a river glasses,
 Or dew from meadow grasses,
 Or mist by dawning spun."

If not for blade or blossom
 Or mantling tree,
 For her who pressed thy bosom,
 Persephone,
 Take heart. Behold, thy daughter
 Has crossed the fire and water,
 And, seeking her who sought her,
 She calls in vain to thee.

Her temples, sunk and wasted,
 Dark ivy twines.
 No corn her lips have tasted,
 No juice of vines.
 Goddess, I hear her weeping
 Like one that sobs in sleeping,
 Or night rains sifting, sweeping
 Among the slumberous pines.

"She hath no thirst or hunger
 For wine or bread.
 She weeps not any longer :
 Her tears are shed.

Long since from locks unbraided,
The ivy leaves, that shaded
Her brows, are fallen and faded.
She sleeps among her dead."

"No throne is mine in heaven,
No throne in hell.
My dragons crushed, and riven
My holiest cell.
With these my part and place is—
Stray wrecks of ruined races
And weary phantom faces
Of gods they once loved well !

British Museum. April, 1903.

AT SEA

RHYMES recalling these
 Days on lonely seas,
 Hours of whitened wave or heaving calm,
 Musing let me write
 Ere, effacéd quite,
 From the mind has fled the elusive charm.

Happier days, perchance,
 Change and circumstance
 In the years to come may bring to birth.
 Yet not seldom they
 That have passed away
 Seem the fairest days of all on earth.

All in vain, in vain,
 'Tis to seek again
 Dreams that fled and joys that passed us by ;
 But these verses, penned
 Ere such things had end,
 Shall be proof of their reality.

THANK-OFFERING

As one scarce saved from wreck and brought to land,
Through the dim swirling surges of the sea,
With heart still full of death's sharp misery,
Lies panting feebly on the striven for strand,
And mutely presses his preserver's hand
Ere yet articulate speech be formed and free,
Such are my plight and thanks to you from me,
Since the words follow not my thoughts' command.

But yet, but yet it may be there shall come,
As the fire flickers in the kindling eyes
Ere on the lips the flame of speech be lit,
Into these lines whereof the soul is dumb,
Some token of the gratitude that lies
At the inmost heart, and is the soul of it.

CALLISTO

Ah, so sweet beyond compare,
The soft trouble in thine eyes,
When the light is clouded there
By the mists of love that rise,
Love which yielding yet denies.

Ah, so fair, and ah, so sweet
The soft tremor of thy mouth
Ere surrender, grown complete,
Harden it in passion's drouth
Slakeless as the flaming South.

Footprint in the dews of dawn,
Dustwhirl on a desert plain,
Shadow of a flickering awn
Of wheat that waits the harvest wain,
These shall last if joy remain,
Nymph, when all thy snows have thawed.

LA BELLE JARDINIÈRE

NEVER wind has blown, nor rain
 Fallen upon flowers like these :
 Never grew such gracile trees,
 Sceptral o'er so fair domain.
 Where are heavens so clear of stain ?
 Where, ah where, those purple hills
 And the pensive peace that fills
 All thy garden of heart's ease,
 Mother of the Prince of Peace ?

Suavely as the flowers of sleep,
 Droop the eyelids of her eyes.
 Ah, what grave felicities
 Arch the brows and bend the sweep
 Of the curving lips that keep
 One sweet smile, yet ever new
 As the wonder of the dew—
 The miracle of paradise
 Wrought anew each morning-rise.

Is the languorous landscape there
 Found in any world we know ?
 Almost Fra Angelico
 Might have limned those graces spare,
 Tenuous in the Umbrian air

As the aureoled saints enskyed.
 Seems the sun-kissed countryside
 Half regretful to forego
 The white maidenhood of snow.

In the fairy days of yore,
 Prisoner in a magic cell
 Was the princess doomed to dwell.
 Clear the threshold of the door,
 But, when she would cross it o'er,
 A fine web of gossamer
 Fell before the face of her.
 Soon broken, but again there fell
 That fragile film infrangible.

Welaway! For out of reach
 Eden lies. Before our face
 Clinging threads of thought enlace
 The door left open wide to each.
 All our pains avail to teach
 Only this—how vain are they.
 Even so.

Yet welaway

For the lost and lovely place
 Of rosemary and herb-o'-grace.

CROCUS AND SMILAX

CROCUS.

AH, the quiver, the throe, the thrill
 Of the sap as it stirs and pricks,
 And, as oil in enkindled wicks,
 Mounts in each emerald quill !
 Not yet has the daffodil
 Dared forth ; Narcissus dreams
 Of his mirroring pools and streams.
 But at last, at last
 Showers the gold of the sun
 Down the freshening blast,
 And the blood begins to run
 In the veins of the frozen earth,
 Till her torpid girth
 Winces and wakes and glows
 Under the muffling snows.

O sweet, sweet love of the starry eyes
 Come back to thy lover. Awake ! Arise !
 For the live winds clamour and fife and blare,
 And is it not better to feel the sting
 Of the vehement breath of the wild young spring
 Than the fummy kiss of the ancient air
 By poplared rivers of pale repose ?

SMILAX.

Afar, like the voices pent
In a spiral shell,
From the dim firmament
Of hollow hell
Faint murmurs gather, and grow
To the sound of a voice I know.
Is it thou? Is it thou?
Fair boy with the crown of gold,
Come down to me.
Let my faint limbs enfold
And gather thee.
My kisses shall teach thee how
To dream long dreams,
Sinking together so
Into the noiseless flow
Of measureless, mazy streams.
Soft swayed in the darkness warm
Of a liquid night,
Our beings shall mix to form
One sole delight,
As we rock with the weeds that ride
In the bosoming swell of the tide.

CROCUS.

Ah, bid me not ere mine hour
To breathe of the ancient air,
My spirit unfolds in flower
To worship thee elsewhere.

Love, stung to a wild desire,
 Has kindled in saffron flames,
 Gold flushing with rosy shames—
 True blossoms of passion-fire—
 Be swift, ere their glory drains
 All life from my dwindling veins,
 And themselves expire.

SMILAX.

I come; but the ways are long
 To the house of birth.

CROCUS.

Only follow the day-star's song
 Which renews the earth.

SMILAX.

Nay; dawn to this weary land
 Comes never, nor eve, nor noon.
 It is lit upon either hand
 By a crescent and orbéd moon
 Of argent beam.
 Like a cataract from the height
 Of heaven the white cascade
 Of silvery frosty light
 Pours down on the sombre shade
 Of woodlands vast.

CROCUS.

While thou art dissolved in dream
 My day flits fast.

SMILAX.

As rains on a roof that dash,
 The light in a deluge pours
 With spangles and globes aflash
 On the cedars and sycamores.
 Till, even as sunlight shines
 Through wind, with the moony showers
 A mystical music twines,
 And the notes of it turn to flowers
 Around my feet.
 Such splendours never were seen—
 Large lilies of chrysoprase,
 Violets of almandine,
 Rose-opals that flicker and blaze—

CROCUS.

Delay not, sweet,
 For the life that arose in me
 Flags witheringly.
 Make haste on the haunted ways
 That wind to the living light.

SMILAX.

I am here.

CROCUS.

Into night
 I vanish as drooping day
 Flares up and consumes away.

I am lapped in the ancient air,
And desire has fallen from me
As a robe flung loose to bare
Hot limbs to the healing sea.

SMILAX.

Too late! Too late!
My love of thee breaks in stars,
And thou wouldst not wait!

CROCUS.

All pass. Thou art passing on,
And I wait by the nenuphars
Embosomed in floods that creep
To the bottomless lightless deep,
The abyss of oblivion.

AT PRIME

Now the shadows of the night
Perish in thy beams, O thou
Of the flame-encircled brow,
Phœbus, glorious lord of light.

Pythian, darter from afar,
Hastily before thee driven,
Flee the trembling flocks of heaven,
Every planet, every star.

Paian, hear our humble prayer.
Hear our prayer for her sweet sake,
Daphne: grant this morn may break
Fortunate for us, and fair.

Grant our love, like hers, to spring
Fadeless still from year to year,
Green when all beside is sear,
Young when youth is withering.

THE LAMENT OF PHRYNICHUS

BESIDE Mæanders stream and bay
 The stateliest city earth has seen
 Sat throned and crowned, as all men say :
 Eleven proud cities hailed her queen.
 Through her wide streets the riches rolled
 Of Libyan gums and Sardian gold
 And amber pale from oceans cold,
 Miletus, ah, Miletus !

The hosts of Persia swarmed around
 Her walls ; the Tyrian triremes shone
 From cape to cape across the sound,
 Blue sailed, with prows vermilion.
 Dearth broke the strength no sword could quell :
 At last the mighty city fell,
 The city by the gods loved well,
 Miletus, ah, Miletus !

Her young men slain, her maidens saved
 To languish in a life of shame,
 Her nobles captive or enslaved,
 Her temples sacked, her halls in flame,
 Such was thy daughter's end who prayed,
 Athens, to thee for sea-borne aid ;
 By thee forsaken, thee betrayed,
 Weep for thy lost Miletus.

RENEE

I.

HOPE'S HAVEN.

CALM seas, wherein the stars of heaven
 Dissolve their fallen fires to shine
 Transfused in lucent hyaline
 Beyond the lilac floors of even,

Enfold the true Inarime.
 White are her marble cliffs ; the sand
 Lies like a curved and golden brand
 Between them and the purple sea.

Ah, hope's own haven ! Happiest home
 Of heart's delight, and loveliest !
 Whither as star-flights seek the West
 All fair things, lost and longed for, come.

Yes, all we fail of here—the song
 Unsung which haunts a poet's heart,
 The glorious shape no sculptor's art
 Yet fixed in marble, thoughts that throng

The soul with sudden ecstasy
 Of insight and lay bare the core
 Of life's enigma,—then once more
 The veil falls, and we wonder why

This world's worth seems as nothingness,—
 And chosen souls, called early hence
 From Earth's inclement indigence
 Of beauty, and the warping stress

Of iron laws which year by year
 Grind down the spirit,—all are there
 With Renée of the shining hair,
 So loved, so lost, so dear.

II.

THE ISLE OF HOMECOMING.

In the Isle of Homecoming
 No sorrow aches at evenfall,
 Nor wakes when dawn's sad cymbals call
 To-day's waste care and travailing.

The fresh glad charm of leafy springs
 Serene and gracious ever lies
 On Renée. Light of heart she flies
 On that soft air's cærulean wings

To take her welcome. "Hither, sweet,"
 "Come hither!" rising from their place,
 The queens of heaven, fulfilled with grace,
 Call to her, stretching arms to greet,—

Agatha, Agnes, Catharine,
 And Dorothy whose messenger
 Came down from heaven to carry her
 Corymbus, wonderful, divine,

To the good knight Theophilus ;
 And with the roses on her knee
 Elizabeth of Hungary,—
 “ Oh, stay thy flight,” they pray, “ with us

“ In our fair garden’s fadeless bowers
 Where is not any fruit forbid,
 Nor the old serpent’s trail lies hid
 Among the purple passion-flowers.”

In the Isle of Homecoming
 All the air is as one tune,
 Melting through some magic swoon
 From purling pipe and pulsing string,

For all the leaves of melody
 Are full, and every flower that blows
 Exhales sweet sound, as doth the rose
 Her perfume when the wind goes by.

III.

THE LYRE OF LOVE.

Then one of that fair company,—
 St. Cecily,—her sunny head
 With damask roses garlanded,
 Whispers, “ Dear child, take flight with me.”

They laugh : and, light as thistle-seed
 Or cloud-shadows on waving wheat,
 Borne on the wind’s stream off their feet,
 They glide away—so sails a glede

Aslant on stirless pinions wide—
 Upward and onward over palm
 And cedar to a cliff that calm
 O'erlooks the many-laughing tide.

And on that thymy foreland's shoulder
 Set, like a cameo brooch that holds
 A green and silken tunic's folds,
 Beam the rosy roofs and smoulder

Duskier cell and portico
 Of a red carnelian fane :
 Seven slim columns rare of stain
 Stand on either side arow.

Beneath the level architrave
 Their polished shafts in panels blue
 Frame air and sea, so blent their hue.
 Scarce one discerns the wind from wave.

Convolvulus all dreamily
 Trails, ruffling in the long sea breeze,
 Along the gilded cornices
 Where white doves croon their monody.

And there is met a stately choir,—
 Masters of song from many days
 And lands :—with loving looks and praise
 A tortoiseshell and ivory lyre

They place upon her childish knee,
 And teach her little hands to go
 Across the silver strings and strow
 Their music of eternity.

Then each with other all rejoice;
 O'er the cliff's brink their pæan's swell
 Rolls, and the angel Israfael,
 Hearing afar, attunes his voice.

IV.

AFTER MANY DAYS.

Ah me! For them with lightsome leap
 Time passes, while with feet that crawl
 Round Earth's beclouded sun-dial
 Our sullen Hours reluctant creep.

But when at last we fall on rest,
 And as a garment cast away
 This threadbare life of hodden grey,
 O island of the shoreless West,

Waking, may we behold thee there
 Beyond the lilac floors of even,
 And 'mid the aureoled choirs of heaven
Her love-lit eyes and shining hair!

PANDEAN

WAVE-MOWN swathes of moonlit beaches,
 Many a night ere life began,
 Crystal-zoned, with wildfires sparkling
 In our back-blown tresses, darkling
 We have danced the dance of Pan
 Down your lonely reaches.

Hark! Above the booming surges
 Bitter-sweet the syrinx thrills.
 How the reedy notes go silting
 Through the tumult! How the lilting
 Mournful music overfills
 All the lorn sea verges!

Swooping from their sparry regions
 On the roaring wings of storm,
 Rush the Oreads, the tameless
 Daughters of the wind, with nameless
 Nymphs who drive the silent swarm
 Of the snow-flake legions.

Hamadryads from the valleys,
 Loath to quit their lichened shells,
 Drift along; their leafy tresses
 Rustle of green wildernesses,
 Wafting faint and ferny smells
 Moist from runnelled alleys.

Claspless from the Naiad's shoulder
Slid, her dripping draperies
Slip from myosotis-laden
Hands. The lissom river-maiden
Stays the folds on lifted knees
Lest the Fauns behold her.

Night is done. The moon declining
Wanes to white carnelian.
Shadowy wraiths, the Sylvans caper,
Whirling off in wreaths of vapour.
Once, afar, the pipes of Pan
Sob ; then cease their pining.

MEMORIA

I.

FROM out the East the tides of morning flow,
 And virgin peaks, their flanks of flawless snow
 Unveiling, bathe in streams of limpid day.

The stars and dreams of night die down the West,
 As the wind wakes, and waves from the ocean's breast
 Leap up and toss their manes of glittering spray.

It is the hour when thought grows cold and clear ;
 The hour of lapsing love ; the hour when near
 Draws the dread thing we live to keep at bay.

The spectral hound which haunts and hunts the soul
 From birth to death, and if beyond the goal
 Of life its fangs shall tear us—who shall say ?

II.

The dawn-wind sobs across the silent land.
 How cold your fingers lie within my hand,
 And in the gathering light, your face how gray !

I hear the whisper of each hollow shell,
 Which was your heart and mine wherein did dwell
 Love once, re-echoing : " Flown, long flown away."

Cliff beyond cliff, the coast-line towards the South
Lies grand and grim; nor hollow of harbour mouth
Is there, nor land-locked cove nor sheltered bay,

And year by year we pass, as cape by cape.
Each headland hailed has seemed the looked for shape
Where, there—but just beyond—our haven lay.

So youth decays; his garlands fall to dust:
And dries the gourd of pilgrimage he thrust
To fill within the enchanted fountain's play.

III.

As when beneath the feet of the urgent sun
The grass swathes shrink and whiten, one by one,
Till all the air is rich with scents of hay,

So from dry days and dead, dim scents and sweet
Seem crushed by one that lifts no nimble feet,
And round our sense confused, to float and play.

With burning hands that char the rue they hold,
And stumbling feet that flew so swift of old,
Memory, with hands of fire but feet of clay,

Approaches, saying: "Ah foolish, would ye fly
From your own selves, for your dead selves am I?
Slain once alive, these dead ye shall not slay."

“Take this for sad remembrance.”—So she said,
The withered stalks with face averse and head
Close veiled extending. But we answered: “Nay.”

“Bringer of grief, depart! We will have none
Of thy most bitter herb. Thine hour is done;
Thou canst not charm us more with that dead spray.

“Come, if thou wilt, with euphrasy to purge
Our eyes to pierce the mist Time’s breaking surge
Sends up, and that red glare of breaking day.”

THE FLUTES OF DEATH

Most gentle of all deities, O queen
 Compassionate and tender and benign,
 Lady of pity and peace, sweet shade serene,
 Calm shelter of all shadows, Proserpine,
 Again I stand a suppliant at thy gate
 And shivering wait
 Wistful and weary. Canst thou hear my call
 There in thy palace hall
 Across the eddying stream of liquid sound
 Slow flowing from thy melancholy flutes,
 That wanders like deep waters underground
 Below life's tangled roots?

Through the wild scroll-work wafts a musky air
 So deadly sweet, I reel, and to a gasp
 My cry sinks broken: blindly, unaware,
 My fingers fold upon the fatal hasp.
 Behind me whines the bitter wind of ill,
 And still, and still
 Upon my face, frozen in miseries,
 Blows warm the thawing breeze.
 And alway do the dreamy flutes bemoan
 Some old unhappy doom, the doom that springs,
 Like water bubbling through uncloven stone,
 To reach the roots of things.

Green dusk'd and purple litten, vague and vast,
 Death's garden lay before me. On the lawns,
 Like smoke-wreaths veering in a fitful blast,
 Danced their old dances still the Nymphs and Fauns.
 Down dim arcade and alley, in and out
 A phantom rout
 Thiasian flitted ; timbrel, sistrion, drum
 They bore, but all was dumb.
 Only, far up within the doméd gloom,
 High echoes pined against the flutes below,
 Chiming aerial antiphons of doom
 Whose meaning none may know.

Vistas of moony jasper colonnade
 Led to the audience chamber and the throne
 Where she, white flower-like blossom of the shade,
 Waits for the wanderer and waits alone.
 About her brows and weight of umber hair
 No crown was there
 But ivy only, and the darksome green
 Those dusky coils between
 Shone cloudily as some mid ocean shoal
 Where a drowned alp gigantic rears his head.
 The damask draperies of her broidered stole
 Seemed woven of summers dead.

Kneeling, I clasped her knees but could not speak,
 While soft as falling snow her accents fell :
 " O thou so pitiful and worn and weak,
 Take at my hands the assuaging œnomel."

I drank: then over me her loosened hair
Swept like a billow breaking in the night.
Her arms, the arms of sleep, went round me there,
And with a kiss she put the past to flight,
Whose joy and sorrow, love and hope and hate
Are but the passage of ephemeral breath
In music blown by unremembering Fate
Upon the flutes of Death.

ERATO

LIKE a scented flame, on the fringed carnations
Feeds the noonday glare, and the Hours lie fallen
Fast asleep with drizzle of fountain spray-mist
Cooling their slumber.

Nod the rose-nymphs all, and their knees relaxing
Under robes aureorean tinged, or amber,
White, or dyed ingrain of resplendent crimson,
Sink overweighted.

All day long in delicate thought enfolded,
Stainless, tall, erect in the sultry silence,
Stand the perfumed ranks of the virgin lily.
Trellis and arbour,

Green with multitudinous leaves of grape-vines,
Hold still pools of shade as a cistern, water.
Shadows fleck the silver and tawny sanded
Paths like a pard-skin.

Ah, that day long dead, when the breeze of morning
Shook the globéd dew from the rose and lily ;
Swung the purple sumptuous clusters pendent
Under the vine leaves !

HERSE

GATHER me under thy wings, O night : from the fear
that besets me

Cover and keep me and fold me where only the
kisses of sleep

Dwell on my face in the dark. Close, close till his
passion forgets me

Hide me away from the god of the day 'neath thy
pinions' sweep.

Clozelier over me now and about me thy plumage of
sable

Down sinks soft as a cloud whose bosom is heavy
with rain.

Soft, yet no transient gloom be thine, nor a presence
unstable

Leaving me lorn to the smile of the dawn at my
ruin again.

Ah, the long cooling caress of the star-sprinkled wind
that is flowing

Smooth through the tenebrous isles of the trees and
the wan faint glow

Of elder brushes that glimmer, as rocks in the south
wind blowing

Whiten when breaks the embrace of the wave into
kisses of snow.

Life's melopœia dies down: slow lapses the rhythm
abated

To tunes such as drone round Persephone's throne
when the goblet is crowned .

With nepenthe spondean; and ever the fume of the
patins affreighted

With amber and musk floats away through the
dusk on the burden of sound.

As my senses subsiding in lethargy leave me, her
casket enchanted

Mnemosyne opes, and I wander 'mid dreams as a
dream with the rest;

Among memories a happy remembrance, a joy unpro-
faned and undaunted,

Serene with impassible eyes and superb with imma-
culate breast,

A goddess, the child of Selene, and nurseling of night
the restorer

Of strength to the weary and ease to the anguished
and all that the day

Dispossesses the soul of to leave her a waif on the
deserts before her

That desolate spread with the bones of the dead for
a sign by the way.

Woe, alas! Is it daybreak so soon? what refuge
remains me, or cover?

Lo, in the orient arisen, what meteor crimsons the
air!

He comes, my desire and my bane, destroyer and
captor and lover,

With fires that ensanguine the sea-line below, and
 the flame of his hair
 Gold-shining. The steeds whinny shrill as they stand
 on the causeway all-brazen,
 The gem-studded pole-head slow thrusting the
 portals of heaven apart.
 Come forth ; make an end of this terror that grips me,
 the anguish that plays on
 My spirit, and strokes with pain's plektron the
 strings that are stretched on my heart.
 Unto thee my last hope is, O mother most holy and
 strong to deliver.
 Haste, for I perish ignobly, a victim disdained and
 defiled.
 Fair shining star-queller, the horns of thy crescent
 drawn close, from thy quiver
 Send the shaft that may slay me, though child of a
 goddess is Herse thy child.
 What ! Is it thou, then, from ocean ascending, Selene,
 to aid me ?
 Is it thou at my calling who comest, most dear, for
 my spirit's release ?
 Better to die at thy hands than to suffer his will who
 betrayed me,
 For thine arrows fall gently as tears fall under the
 kisses of peace.
 Wilt thou not tarry and turn to the pitiful cry that is
 pleading,
 Pleading as only a child to her mother can plead?
 But thy car

Up the unscaleable star-thronged heights through
 heaven receding,

Moves; in the halo irradiant around it, lo star upon star
 Transfused! Ah, the life that thou gavest, take back.

Let thy glory enfold me.

In thy luminous aureole enswathed, let me vanish
 as into the sea

Fades the white dream of the foam, and never shall
 Eos behold me

Borne afar and away from the confines of day to
 thy cavern with thee.

Still thy chariot moves upward and onward, serenely,
 securely, sedately,

As a dromond slips sailing away from a swimmer, a
 speck in her wake.

Am I thy daughter indeed, O power imperturbable,
 stately?

What hast thou done for me, borne for me, striven
 or felt for my sake?

Ah me, that my life as a garment were doffed, and as
 vesture were changéd,

Ere I sicken at sight of the gathering light in the
 precincts afar

Where the Hours of the morning, high-girt, proces-
 sional, joyous, and rangéd,

Stand hard by the portals celestial, the ponderous
 valves to unbar.

Out of obscurity looming, of heaven the vast propylæa
 Acroceræaunian that stand 'twixt earth and the
 fortress divine,

Vast, stupendous, with columns colossal as peaks of
 Pangæa,
 Rise, the entablature fronted with stars, and the
 gable ashine
 Glorious with great constellations. How lovely the
 hues of the æther,
 Lake, limpid yellow and azure, the green of a wave
 as it rolls,
 Play on the pillars of fire-fringed cloud! How the
 ocean, beneath her
 Reddening, flames as flamboyant dawn soars up
 from the goals
 Of the sun! Now the fire-steeds leap up over the
 barrier, extremest
 Horizon of orbital circles that compass and wall us
 around,
 Unseen, unattainable ever. O god of my ruin, thou
 beamest
 Forth, and before thee are scattered the stars, and
 the moon as a sound
 Dies out, and the fastnesses fall of the night, and her
 hidden dominions
 Under thee naked, defenceless, lie; and I tremble and
 cower
 Deep in the moist red heart of a rose from the whirl of
 the pinions
 Of thy griffins hovering above me as humming-
 moths over a flower.
 But the rose laughs amorously, and petal by petal
 unfolding,

Bares her opulent bosom to welcome the deluge of
 germinal gold
 And warm and voluptuous his breath plays over mine
 eyes unbeholding,
 Closed as I slip through cool verdures adrip to the
 moss-padded mould.
 Shameless, the red rose mocks at my flight, and her
 sister, the frailer
 Colourless blossom, deriding saith "Fleest thou,
 virgin, and whom?
 Has not our lover, thine also, enjoyed thee, O Herse,
 that paler
 Than we with the passion that drains thee, thou
 feignest to hide in the gloom?"
 Out of thy chambers, O lily, thy perfumed pellucid
 recesses
 White as the moonlight and powdered with aureate
 moon-coloured dust,
 Yield me not up to the fierce sweet shame of his
 ruthless caresses.
 Too late! For they seize me and bear me aloft
 in a dizzying gust
 Of passionate ecstasy rising in rapture ineffable.
 Spare me!
 Bid me not perishing yield up my soul to be burned
 in our bliss.
 Nay, as thou wilt, then, belovéd; assume me and
 ravish and bear me
 A mist through the sky mounting moth-like to die
 and be lost in thy kiss.

ANTEROS

STARLIKE, Love will shine above thee
Making melody that stirs
Wandering echoes in thy spirit,
Till his very song, thou hear it
When thy lips shall silence hers
Murmuring "I love thee."

Then the cold, the distant splendour
Shall be flame in her sweet eyes,
And the spherical music broken
Into passion's anthem spoken
Half in kisses, half in sighs
Deep with slow surrender.

EPILOGUE

FAREWELL, farewell ; my masque of song is over ;
 The mimes' brief pageantry dissolves away
 And with them I, a shadow even as they,
 A singing voice, no more. Not mine to cover
 Stern truths with winning phrases, in sweet sound
 Dissembling new philosophies profound.
 In parables I speak not, nor, O friend,
 To message or to prophecy pretend,
 Pæan or psalm of some diviner day.

Yet linger, if you list, within the garden
 My muse has tended. Tarry at your ease,
 Letting your thoughts roam like the honey-bees
 Down flowery ways, while Erato the warden
 Makes mellow music all the summer noon,
 Lulling us to forgetfulness how soon
 Music and summer, noon and song must go
 Their way, the old sad road that leads below.
 And we—must we too fall and follow these ?

Whither ? Ah, thought to stun and stagger reason,
 This flesh shall see corruption. Here we sit,
 Warm and alive, and try to picture it,
 The loathsome end, but cannot. Change of season,

Winter for summer, night for day, the sleep
 Of passive age for life's impetuous leap
 In youth, involve us and we understand :
 But not that Change with uncreating hand
 Hid in the grisly horror of the Pit.

And other fears there be, dim gulfs of terror
 Above, beneath, without us and within :
 The ghost inscrutable this body's skin
 Encloses, consciousness the magic mirror
 Itself reflecting, boundless spaces dread,
 Deep beyond deep, of starry heaven o'erhead,
 Reason divided 'gainst herself that sees
 Truth's rock a quicksand of antinomies,
 And time's abyss, and mystery of sin.

But as one, led by cloud-hung precipices
 Along a dizzy ledge, who feels the sense
 Of empty space become a dazed immense
 Impulse to plunge down infinite abysses,
 Steadies his gaze on weed or crannied flower
 Whose humble charm wards off the hostile Power,
 So I with frail deciduous blooms of song
 Rescue my soul from the bewildering throng
 Of thoughts that daunt and yet allure her hence.

Still, though so fugitive my flowers and lowly,
 Such inconspicuous herbs as one may deign
 Idly to cull and cast aside again,
 Yet are they witnesses to that most holy

Beauty, eternal, infinite, the truth
Transcendant, bloom and crown of lovely youth,
The graciousness of manhood, and the sage
Serene nobility of reverend age,
Man's song of praise, and music of his pain.

On thy pure altar stone, O radiant spirit,
I lay this garland of my heart's increase,
Sorrow's dark violet, the leaves of peace,
Love's myrtle, sleep's red poppy-flower, and near it
The paler, chosen of death for anadem.
Ah, take the gifts because my life with them
Is offered. And a stephanotis spray,
Odorous and white, beside my wreath I lay,
Won from thy fadeless glorious garden, Greece.

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